

New Austin floodplain maps take effect soon

Those new to the boundaries should get flood insurance soon, city says

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New flood plain maps for Austin are set to take effect Sept. 26, and city officials are urging homeowners in affected areas to buy flood insurance by mid-August.

The maps are the result of a five-year effort by the city and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to gather up-to-date hydrological data and reassess flood risks citywide.

City officials don't have an exact number, but they said that a few hundred properties will move in or out of a flood plain based on the new maps. Some of the city's existing maps are 30 years old.

Property owners who will soon be in a flood plain who are not currently should get flood insurance soon, said Ray Windsor, a flood plain administrator in the city's Watershed Protection and Development Review Department.

By applying 30 to 45 days before the new maps take effect, those residents are likely to get lower rates because they essentially would be grandfathered in under their current status as less of a flood risk, he said. It also usually takes a month for flood insurance to take effect, he said.

Windsor said the watershed department did not have the resources or technology to notify every affected property owner, so it is asking the public to look at the new maps online.

Residents can also view the maps at the department's offices at One Texas Center, 505 Barton Springs Road; or at the Ruiz and Windsor Park branch libraries.

Some areas being moved into a flood plain in the new maps are: part of the Williamson Creek watershed, including properties between South Congress Avenue and Emerald Forest Drive; properties near Dalton Lane and Jet Lane in the Carson Creek watershed; and properties near Berkman Drive and Rogge Lane in the Fort Branch watershed.

Areas that will no longer be in a flood plain include: the area in the East Bouldin Creek watershed roughly bounded by South Congress Avenue, South First Street, Ben White Boulevard and the Colorado River; the Crystalbrook subdivision, near Walnut Creek; and the Creek Bend subdivision in the Williamson Creek watershed.

Some of those properties were removed from a flood plain based on fresh hydrological and topographic data; others were taken out because the city completed flood-control projects, such as building flood walls to protect about 300 homes in the Creek Bend and Crystalbrook subdivisions, Windsor said.

Central Texas is prone to flash flooding, and identifying flood plains helps the city restrict development in those areas and alert property owners to the flood risk, he said.

Austin's last major flood was a Nov. 15, 2001, storm in which one person died and \$27 million worth of public and private property was damaged, Windsor said.

The maps show areas most in danger of a "100-year flood," defined as a flood level that has a 1 percent chance of being equaled or exceeded each year.

Homes in a 100-year flood plain have a 26 percent chance of getting flooded over a 30-year period, about five times greater than the risk of a serious fire.

Planning for the new boundaries began in 2003. The city and FEMA unveiled proposed new maps in March 2006. The city held public meetings, and residents had three months to propose changes to the maps.

The council is scheduled to hold a final public hearing and vote on whether to adopt the new maps at 6 p.m. Aug. 7.

Flood plain changes

New Austin flood plain maps take effect Sept. 26. City officials are encouraging homeowners within the new boundaries to buy flood insurance by Aug. 11. Residents can view the new maps at www.cityofaustin.org/watershed/floodplain_newmap.htm.

Some areas being moved into a flood plain:

Williamson Creek watershed:Area of Oak Hill Pond and Covered Bridge Drive; near Fletcher Lane; along Fair Valley Trail; and between South Congress Avenue and Emerald Forest Drive.

Carson Creek watershed:Near Dalton Lane and Jet Lane.

Country Club East and West watersheds:Area roughly bounded by East Oltorf Street, South Pleasant Valley Road and Burleson Road.

Fort Branch watershed:Near Berkman Drive and Rogge Lane.

Slaughter Creek watershed:Near Canon Yeomans Trail.

Tannehill watershed:A few commercial structures near Highland Mall.

Some areas being moved out of a floodplain:

Boggy Creek watershed:Along Clarkson Avenue.

Dry Creek North watershed:Area north of Dry Creek Drive, close to Camino Seco and Mountainclimb Drive.

East Bouldin Creek watershed:Roughly bounded by South Congress Avenue, South First Street, Ben White Boulevard and the Colorado River.

Fort Branch watershed: Area between Norwood Hill Road and East 51st Street.

Little Walnut Creek watershed:Area along Colony Creek Drive, bounded by Hunter's Trace and Galewood Drive.

Shoal Creek watershed: Area along Millway Drive from Stanwood Drive to Benbrook Drive; a few homes along Ullrich Avenue.

Slaughter Creek watershed:Along Tecate Trail.

South Boggy Creek watershed: Along Shiloh Drive, between Manassas Drive and Caisson Circle; another few homes along Seminary Ridge Drive.

Tannehill Branch:Some properties southeast of Springdale Road.

Waller Creek:Area near Chesterfield Avenue, north of Koenig Lane.

Walnut Creek: Crystalbrook subdivision, from Crystalbrook Drive to Pecan Brook Drive, north of Loyola Lane.

Williamson Creek watershed:Creek Bend subdivision, bounded by South Pleasant Valley up to Creek Bend Drive.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin